



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Nuances of Palestinian Self-Determination: An analysis of the ramifications of the Oslo Accords on Palestinian national aspiration for self-determination**

Alnazer, Yara

### **Citation**

Alnazer, Y. (2022). *Nuances of Palestinian Self-Determination: An analysis of the ramifications of the Oslo Accords on Palestinian national aspiration for self-determination.*

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3294626>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Bachelor Thesis

BSc: International Relations and Organizations

**Nuances of Palestinian Self-Determination:**  
*An analysis of the Ramifications of the Oslo Accords on  
Palestinian National Aspiration for Self-Determination*

Yara Alnazer

S2141051



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
The Netherlands

---

Supervisor:

Dr Arlinda Rrustemi

Second reader: Dr Floris Beck Mansvelt

Leiden Universiteit

Faculty of Behavioural Science

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Literature Review & Theoretical Framework.....	4
Theoretical and legal conceptualization of the principle: .....	4
Narratives of self-determination in Palestine:.....	5
Self-determination as a national desire: Intifada.....	6
Self-determination in Oslo:.....	7
Methodology.....	9
Research Design, Case Selection, & Data Collection:.....	9
Limitations:.....	10
Data Analysis.....	11
National aspiration for self-determination.....	11
Rule of Law.....	12
Self-determination in Economy.....	14
Self-determination in Education.....	15
Self-determination in Politics.....	16
Concluding the Analysis:.....	18
Conclusion.....	19
VI. Bibliography.....	19
<i>Primary Data:</i> .....	19
<i>Secondary Data:</i> .....	20

## **Introduction**

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a conflict between two identities, striving to assert their right to existence and sovereignty on disputed land. The plight of the Palestinians' right to self-determination stands out as being one of the few cases in which there has been a success at constructing a defined national identity and clear national consciousness, but a failure in reaching sovereignty and statehood. Before the establishment of the state of Israel, Palestinians struggled to gain sovereignty and autonomy, as they experienced waves of Ottoman and British colonialism, hindering their access to state structures. Since 1948, Palestinians have faced an additional challenge to their right to self-determination; the existence of another potent identity claiming self-determination on the same territory.

The Oslo Accords, signed between 1993 and 1999, is the first official peace process between Palestine and Israel. The Accords granted Palestinians limited self-rule over the West Bank and Gaza. However, as an interim agreement, Oslo has an expiration date, which until this day could not be finalized as the negotiation process failed. This paper argues that despite the level of autonomy achieved after Oslo, the rightful external self-determination for Palestinians was not achieved, hence it cannot lead to natural secession. Accordingly, the autonomy achieved in Oslo will be compared to the degree to which Palestinians feel they can decide their futures and destinies. This study aims to answer the question; what is the effect of the Oslo Accords on the national aspirations for self-determination?

This study consists of five sections. The following section proposes a literature review and a theoretical framework on the principle of self-determination and applies it to the case of Palestine's quest for independence, additionally, it draws on the connection between the principle of self-determination and the Oslo Accords. The third section discusses the research methodology and its applicability to the research question, in addition to the imposed limitations of the study. While the fourth section examines primary and secondary data and integrates the arguments by addressing the different facets of self-determination. Overall, the fourth section provides a solid understanding of the process and outcomes of the Oslo Accords. Finally, the last section of this study seeks to give a conclusion of the study, as well as some recommendations and reflections.

## Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

This section will discuss relative literature on the principle of self-determination, its historical, theoretical, and legal implementation in international law and international relations. Further, both the Israeli and Palestinian narratives of self-determination were discussed in the context of partition and territorial integrity. Finally, the Palestinian demand for independence from Israeli domination crystalized during the twenty years of the Israeli usurpation of the West Bank and was first effectively mobilized in the First *Intifada* (Uprising), which urged for the negotiations which ultimately produced Oslo.

### Theoretical and legal conceptualization of the principle

The principle of self-determination has been circulating in political debates since the 18th Century within concepts such as justice and freedom. According to Fisch (2015), self-determination refers to the right of peoples to decide their futures, political destinies, and their right to secession (P. 43). The principle was first embraced in the political discourse by Stalin and Lenin, who considered self-determination as an anti-imperialist measure and a tool to fight colonialism (Medina, 2020). Lenin was committed to national self-determination, which entailed political separation from the oppressor and the establishment of an independent nation-state. In response, President Wilson referred to the concept in his fourteen points to end World War I (Klabbers, 2006). He argued that a democratic approach to self-determination will lead to world peace (Klabbers, 2006). Although Wilson's conception was echoed by nations such as Syria and Egypt, scholars such as Fisch (2015) and Massad (2018) argued that Wilson was only referring to the nations of defeated empires, as he supported the Mandate systems of victor empires. Nonetheless, Wilson challenged multinational empires and suggested that the emergence of nation-states would lead to peace.

The term self-determination was first conceptualized in legal discourse after World War II. beginning with Chapter I Article 1 of the UN Charter of 1945, which referred to "equal rights and self-determination" as measures to achieve world peace (Aral, 2018). However, the notion of self-determination collided with territorial integrity and created a legal dilemma. The dilemma is materialized in Chapter I Article 2 of the Charter, whereby it prohibits the use of force against territorial integrities (Fisch, 2015). However, classical self-determination recognizes that in order to exercise national self-determination, territorial integrity would be challenged and lead to violence. This dilemma led to the redefinition of the concept. Through

the 1950s and 1960s, various resolutions and declarations converted self-determination from a concept to a legal right. Moreover, it set the basis for decolonization and more states becoming independent. As Medina (2020) illustrates, to counter the ramifications of claiming self-determination on national identities and territorial integrity, international treaties and international discourse suggested that self-determination does not necessarily lead to state independence, and therefore could be fulfilled through other means, such as self-government or autonomy. However, these treaties validated the right to self-determination and quest for independence to people subjected to alien subjugation (e.g., UN Resolution 1514). This laid out the difference between external self-determination and internal self-determination, whereby the former leads to independent statehood of a people, and only applied to cases of colonialism and military occupation, while the latter refers to people's autonomy within their state, according to Klabbers (2006).

### Narratives of self-determination in Palestine

The right of Palestinians to self-determination has been enshrined under the Covenant of the League of Nations 1920, whereby the Mandatory prepares the former colonies of the defeated empires for self-rule and governance (Aral, 2018). As a Mandatory, Britain had an obligation to prepare Palestine for independence. However, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 already granted the establishment of a Jewish state on the land of Palestine, notwithstanding that Palestine was a potential candidate for being established as its own independent state after WWI. However, the development was disrupted by British colonialism and the lack of adequate institutions. Independence was further challenged by a highly mobilized nationalism, that of Zionism (Khalidi, 2010). As a result of power asymmetry, the establishment of Israel has been regarded as “self-determination” and not as “settler-colonialism” and allowed one national narrative to establish itself at the expense of another one (Khoury, 2016). Both narratives regarding their right to fulfill independent statehood on the territory are opposites.

Firstly, according to Khoury (2016), “the Zionist narrative is premised on the religious and ethnic link between the ancient Israelites and the modern Israelis” (p. 468). Their exile from their homeland followed by dire periods of discrimination and subjugation suggested that preserving their identity needed to be institutionalized by returning to the ancestral land and establishing a Jewish state. Secondly, the Palestinian narrative claims the right to national self-determination based on “continues presence on the land” (Khalidi, 2010). This narrative begs

the question: why do the Jewish people have the right to return after 2000 years, expel the nation that has been there for 2000 years and establish an exclusively Jewish state? On the other hand, Palestinians who have been expelled for 70 years after the *Nakba* cannot exercise their right to return and right of residency. Simply, in order for Zionism to prevail, the Arab majority had to be uprooted and replaced with a Jewish majority (Pappe, 2006).

The international community believed that the best way to maintain peace was partition, highlighted in UN Resolution 181. Partition entails limiting the national narratives to the partitioned borders (Khalidi, 2010). However, as both sides claim rights to the entirety of the land, partition was not suitable in the context of power asymmetry. During the 1967 war, Israel annexed the West Bank and claimed their right to “Judea and Samaria”. To deny Palestinians the right to self-determination is also denying Palestinian peoplehood and their history on the land. “There was no such thing as Palestinians,” Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel was quoted in the Sunday Times and Washington Post in June 1969. “When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? ... It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist” (Soussi, 2019). On the other hand, Palestinians have rejected partition, and through their political discourse, they referred to their inherited right to the land and their struggle against colonialism, such as the National Covenant and the Charter of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (Foster, 2014). two decades after the Israeli military occupation and Civil Administration over the West Bank and Gaza, both sides’ rejection of partition ended with the peace process of Oslo Accords.

### Self-determination as a national desire: Intifada

According to UN Resolution 1514, “the subjection of people to alien subjugation [...] is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations” (Article 1). The period after *Nakba* is described with dispossession and dispersion. However, the alien subjugation deepened following the annexation of the West Bank in 1967. Palestinians lived under Israeli military occupation and Civil Administration, whereby Israel governed Palestinians by oppressive and discriminatory policies (Khalidi, 2010). Israel controlled all aspects of life, and the occupation utilized its power to prevent Palestinians from exercising their right to determine their future. The alien subjugation of Palestinians led to the rise of resistance and liberation movements inside

Palestine and among the diaspora. Resistance movements struggled with echoing their demands for independence during the *Intifada*, while the PLO was unable to achieve territorial concessions with Israel due to power asymmetry and being chased out of the hosting countries e.g., Lebanon and Jordan (Robinson, 1997).

Despite the power asymmetry, the seed of the Palestinian revolution was harvested in the prisoner's exchange deal of 1985, which released the fuel of the first *Intifada*, which started in 1987 and lasted until 1993. Prior to the Intifada, Israel had no incentive to make territorial compromises. However, according to Pappé (2006), Oslo could not have happened without the *Intifada*. The rise of the first *Intifada* paved the way for negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Chomsky (1990) argues that the civil disobedience and the international attention given to the Palestinian uprising altered the common perception and changed the views of many. The appeal of keeping the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) under Israeli occupation decreased, as the costs of repression increased. Israel was at risk of losing its allies, the U.S was not interested in covering high costs of occupation, and European leaders were calling for sanctions (Chomsky, 1990, p. 345).

On the other hand, it is also argued that the military weakness of the PLO and their declining status among the Arab countries were the PLO's incentives to negotiate with Israel (Waage, 2016). Under these circumstances, international efforts to initiate peace talks came to fruition leading to the secret channels of Oslo negotiations. However, the exiled leadership of the PLO developed different views from the leadership in Palestine on key priorities. As Bauck (2016) points out, "the exile leadership was focused mainly on recognition, statehood, and their related symbols, whereas the leadership on the Occupied Territories focused on ending the oppression and exploitation arising from the Israeli occupation" (p. 90). Through Oslo, the PLO achieved a certain degree of self-rule and autonomy, but it could not fulfill the national aspiration for self-determination with preservation of territorial integrity. Hence, bona fide sovereignty was not achieved.

### Self-determination in Oslo

The Oslo Accords refers to the 9 different agreements between the PLO and Israel from 1993 until 1999. It started with a letter of mutual recognition, whereby Yasir Arafat, leader of the PLO, recognized the right of Israel to exist (Kelman, 2007, p. 290). In return, the Israeli Prime Minister Shamir recognized the PLO as the only legitimate representative of Palestinians. Power asymmetry was not only significant in this exchange, but also throughout the rest of the



process. The framework of Oslo goes in line with UN Resolutions 181 and 242, which do not treat the Palestinian right to return or self-determination. Therefore, the Oslo Accords “stipulated PLO recognition of the legitimacy of Israel as a state established on Jewish-colonized Palestinian lands” (Massad, 2018).

Instead, the goal was to establish a limited self-governance authority on the occupied Palestinian territories, which is not geared towards independence, and maintains inherent dependence on Israel (Kelman, 2007). For example, there are agreements related to security coordination between the PA and the Israeli intelligence and army. Moreover, the Paris Protocol 1994 attached the Palestinian economy to its Israeli counterpart. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the Oslo Accords left out 6 main issues until further negotiations (Waage, 2013). The Final Status issues are; (1) Jerusalem, (2) right of return, (3) settlement expansion, (4) security arrangements, (5) borders, and (6) relations with neighbouring countries. In postponing the agreement on fundamental issues, “the PLO negotiators have “fell into traps” that the Palestinian delegation in Washington had been working to avoid” (Anziska, 2018, p. 284). However, the Camp David negotiations in 2000 could not lead to any agreement. Arafat gave up on Oslo and returned to armed struggle, and the Second *Intifada* started in 2000, and did not end until the death of Arafat in 2004 (Bauk, 2016).

The idea behind Oslo was a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli military from the West Bank and a gradual handing over of authority and responsibilities to the PLO. The claims of self-determination or even “liberation” was not treated in Oslo and the negotiations evaded the discussion (Khoury, 2016). Initially, it was agreed that the PLO would take control of Palestinian-dominant cities and Israel would slowly withdraw from territories until the Green Line is reached. Therefore, the West Bank was divided to three areas; (1) Area A (18% of WB) is under Palestinian control, (2) Area B (22% of WB) is under joint control, and (3) Area C (60% of WB) is under Israeli control. However, this scheme was used as a strategy to expand settlements in the WB, annex more lands and keep the PA dependent on Israel. Theoretically, the PA is what Fanon calls “a postcolonial government”, which thought it could be the instrument to achieve freedom. However, Fanon (2004) argues that postcolonial governments are unable to achieve freedom from colonization, and lead to internal division, corruption, discrimination, mediocre leadership, and economic dependency on the colonizer. Further, Fanon (2004) argues that colonization uses violence as a means of social control, therefore, the reciprocation of violence is necessary to politically engage with it.

This framework argues that Oslo was unable to achieve external self-determination. Instead, it achieved a skewed version of internal self-determination, where the internal authority exists within the state of occupation, allowing Israel to subject Palestinians to interventions in their affairs and subject them to further violence and oppression. Aspects of self-determination vary in their treatment within the agreements. Some aspects such as state symbols were treated but other aspects such as legitimacy, borders, and foreign relations were not discussed. The effects of Oslo on the perceptions of Palestinians towards self-determination are thus nuanced.

In accordance, this study proposes two hypotheses;

- i. The Oslo Accords maintains a positive effect on the national aspiration for self-determination
- ii. The Oslo Accords maintains a negative effect on the national aspiration for self-determination.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design, Case Selection, & Data Collection:**

To test the hypotheses on whether Oslo has a positive or negative effect on the national aspiration for self-determination, a definition of “positive” and “negative” outcomes needs to be established. The theoretical framework already established that Palestinian self-determination was evaded throughout the peace process. It is also established that what Oslo achieved was limited internal self-determination. This study aims to explore the effect of the ramifications of Oslo and whether it distorted and distracted the national aspiration for self-determination (negative outcome). In other words, are Palestinians satisfied with their current status (positive outcome) or is self-determination still demanded?

This study employs a mixture of primary and secondary sources to draw on a wide range of information to adequately address the research question. The question is approached in an explorative manner, whereby primary data is directly collected through qualitative interviews, and secondary data are documented sources such as published books, journals, academic articles, and internet sources. Secondary data cannot provide details such as personal experiences, feelings, memories, and most importantly highlight the nuances of the principle of self-determination (Gillham, 2000, p. 11).

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the primary data, content analysis is adequate for analysing the themes and concepts covered in the data (Gillham, 2000). This approach allows for the determination of the suitable themes to be focused on for the next chapters of the research. Additionally, it provides an insight into cultural and historical references. This method was chosen due to the nature of interviews as a source of additional information, which could be useful in critically evaluating existing literature (Gillham, 2000).

Due to the divergence of the subject, 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews were necessary to reflect people's voices, investigate the complexities of the subject, and represent the informal reality of the group. The nature of the questions asked in the interviews was collected from the secondary data and sought to test the accuracy of their hypotheses. Due to technical difficulties, only 19 interviews were transcribed and analysed. The testimonies will be organized into thematic categories to be discussed in the following chapter.

This study conducts case-study research on Palestinian self-determination, whereby the effects of the peace process (Oslo Accords) on the perceptions of self-determination will be assessed. This case study is unique because of the existence of two potent nations claiming self-determination for the same territory. The participants were chosen based on their; affiliation, gender, religion, activism, and city. The most covered affiliations were Fateh, Hamas, and independents. Nonetheless, the left was also represented. The most covered areas were Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Hebron. However, Participants from the North (Nablus and Jenin), and the South (Bethlehem) were also represented. Additionally, refugees and returnees were included. The Professions of the participants varied, as some were politicians, business owners, activists, journalists, teachers, and others. Upon their request, some participants decided to remain anonymous, hence pseudonyms were used, whereby the name of the respondents was changed as suggested in the bibliography list (referenced as Yazan and Ameer) By the time this thesis was completed, two participants were arrested by the Israeli military for their activism; Nasser Hidmi and Emad Abu Shamsiya.

### Limitations:

It is important to point out that this is not a representative sample. Due to specific complexities, certain points of view or affiliations were not covered in the sample. Additionally, the method includes respondents from the West Bank only. Due to the dispersion of the Palestinian nation across the world, Palestinians in different territories developed to have different identities and

different conceptualizations. Due to the scope of this study, it is rational to only cover one territory.

Moreover, each person's perspective on the effect of the Oslo Agreement differs from one person to another, as do their relevant experiences and affiliations. This necessitated the changing of certain questions for those who interpreted things differently, based on their institutional and social paradigms. After critically assessing each interview, it is also important to point out that some of the information provided by the interviewees were false. Further, all interviews were conducted in Arabic. They were video recorded and later transcribed and translated to English, which is why some of the meaning was lost in translation.

## **Data Analysis**

This chapter will analyse the various dimensions in which (aspirations of) self determination manifest. Specifically, it will juxtapose the political realities and the interviewees' aspirations and sentiments on such reality. This section will provide a comprehensive view of how the Oslo Accords have contributed to the Palestinian national aspiration for self-determination.

### [National aspiration for self-determination](#)

The pursuit of self-determination was re-embraced with the rise of the First *Intifada*. Palestinian civilians took the streets and participated in general strikes and demonstrations against the oppression of occupation. Their participation expressed a desire for liberation and independence (Nasser-Najjab, 2020). The *Intifada* returned the Palestinian cause to its natural position, calling for an end to the occupation and establishment of a Palestinian state.

On an individual level, the majority of the interviewees were either teenagers or young adults during the first *Intifada*. However, their description of their participation, even in its simplistic form, recounts a nation's aspiration to exercise its right to decide its future. This includes being free from alien oppression and military domination, Arouri (personal communications, 2021) argues that the "utmost goal was security and feeling safe". Also, the principle includes being free from economic and political domination and foreign intervention in internal affairs. Aside (personal communications, 2021) suggested that the vision "was that the Palestinians are the

ones to take control of this land, with the existence of the Israelis, so Israelis remain as citizens, but the ones in control are the Palestinians, that includes the return of the refugees, and Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine” (Aside, personal communications, 2021). Furthermore, the same vision was shared by other respondents. Abu Amsa (personal communications, 2021). illustrated that “we had ideas, beautiful ones, about living in a democratic state where even Jews can live in but under Palestinian rule. Refugees would come back and people would get their rights back, and the process of displacement and violation of rights and theft of property and homes would end”.

On the other hand, many other respondents had a more simplistic view “our vision was not that big to understand the idea of “how our state will look after getting rid of occupation”, the first *Intifada* was “we reject this occupation, period.” What is going to come after that? I have no idea” (Hidmi, personal communications, 2021).

The Oslo Accords was presented to the Palestinians as tool to achieve freedom and independence. A tool to achieving self-determination and peace. However, Ashrawi, former Palestinian minister and legislator (personal communications, 2021) argued that “unfortunately, they did not end the occupation, they [PLO] did not negotiate the main, the essential causes. Not only that, but their goal was to save the PLO as an organization, not save it as a principle and an idea”

## Rule of Law

If independent statehood is the end goal, then the rule of law is a fundamental pillar of the state structure. A functioning rule of law is one way to assert sovereignty, and it plays a key role in fulfilling self-determination. However, a weak rule of law could lead to the weakening of the national project. The weak application of the law in Palestine led to a decrease in people's feeling of being self-determined and sovereign.

Clan structure and tribal law had a big role in solving issues and serving justice Before Oslo, because under the Israeli Civil Administration, it was considered unethical to go to the Israeli police and file a complaint against a fellow Palestinian. However, Mi’ari (2009) argues that tribal affiliations are considered backward and damaging to national identities, which is why tribalism was denounced during the *Intifada*. Throughout history, clans, and tribes were allies to colonization as they became warlords, which is why they cannot be part of a national solution

(Abu Rtema, 2016). All the respondents reported a decrease in tribal affiliations in the first five years after Oslo, compared to how it was before the *Intifada*, but also reported an increase after five years. The increase of tribal affiliations is linked to the weakness of the PA, and the militarization of those clans. The weakness of the PA can be separated into two main dimensions. The first dimension is directly related to the A-B-C-areas, which resulted from Oslo. The second dimension is related to the Palestinian Security Forces (PSF), the judiciary, and the leadership in general

Firstly, the PSF only has jurisdiction over Area A. However, Area A is fragmented and has no geographic continuation, and moving across it requires passing through Area B and C (Deyslva, 2020). PSF members cannot pass through those areas without coordinating with the Israeli Military and receiving permission. According to a Hebronite, “Area H2 became an area that security could not get to. And the security took this as an excuse [to not operate] that this is not their responsibility anymore. They saw that this is the tribes’ responsibility” (Qawasmeh, personal communications, 2021).

Secondly, there is a systematic error in the formation and recruitment process of the PSF. There are simply not enough soldiers as members, while on the other hand, there is a high number of officials, who cannot do the same fieldwork as a soldier, according to the deputy governor of Hebron (Dudien, special communications, 2021). This is conflicted with the militarization of clans. For example, the clans in Hebron city have a higher military capacity than the PA, and in some incidents, confrontations occurred between the PSF and a clan, where eventually the PSF were unable to control the situation. The PSF lacks the will to offer substantive security to the Palestinians because there is a price to be paid, which is members of the PSF getting injured or killed in confrontations. As the PSF's foremost mission is to ensure Israel's security (Abu Rtema, 2016).

As some respondents have suggested, the weakness of the judiciary stems from a lack of political will to enforce the rule of law on everybody equally, evidently, “when one is persecuted and the other is not. When one is imprisoned and the other not [...] then here lies the problem” (Yazan, personal communications, 2021). With the inability of the PSF and the judiciary to implement the rule of law equally, then people will feel betrayed. If an authority is not protecting its citizens equally, then it won't be able to protect them against alien subjugation and external domination. According to Dr. Alsheikh (personal communications, 2021), a scholar from Jerusalem, “we became agents of the civil administration, the civil administration

still exists, and unfortunately, the totality of the Palestinian boreoartic apparatus is inextricably linked to the occupation”

### Self-determination in Economy

The Oslo Accords have indefinitely linked the Palestinian economy to the Israeli one. Consequently, a majority of the respondents have argued that a new class emerged. The new class or a caste is what some have called “nouveau riche”, while the majority called it the “beneficiary class”. The beneficiary class was not described as an economic classification only, rather, a socio-political one as well. This class benefits from its political and commercial relations to the PA and the occupation. Their benefits lie directly within Oslo and the status quo, which according to respondents, goes against the national goal. While some respondents described these people as “fifth column”, other people also claimed that there is a correlation between this class and the returnees. “The returnees” is a term that refers to the 14,000 refugee Palestinians who have returned to Occupied Palestinian territory as part of the Oslo Agreement. Their further descendants are also socially classified as returnees. According to an anonymous respondent “the returnees obtained all the privileges without paying... Some people were present in the country and started the first *Intifada*, and according to it, the PA was formed. But as the returnees returned, they held the PA’s positions and privileges. So, that was the start of discrimination” (Ameer, personal communications, 2021). For example, the first six cabinets, headed by Arafat, were dominated by the returnees, holding the top positions of the government, such as the presidency, prime minister, minister of interior affairs, and other high ranks of PSF. Coincidentally, the governments were also dominated by Fateh members.

Furthermore, the domination of the economy has created a social cleavage because it benefited a certain minority and allowed the PA to exercise corruption and nepotism. People started witnessing an exponential increase and ostentatious display of the wealth of leaders, which was new to the Palestinian society. “We started seeing these revolutionaries who didn’t have anything except their military uniform, now they are millionaires” (Hidmi, personal communications, 2021). According to a Jerusalemite respondent, she would no longer make sacrifices, because her sacrifices would not benefit the national cause anymore. She adds that “the first *Intifada* and its martyrs were the cost for these people to return. [...]. We are not in the same fight for the country” (Masrouji, personal communications, 2021).

Aroui (personal communications, 2021) argues that “the PA protects the occupation to a certain degree, and gives privileges to certain people to have access to resources and prevent others”. While Akkawi (personal communications, 2021) argues that “their [PA members] identity is to maintain their interests, which lies within Oslo”. Additionally, Zuheiri (personal communications, 2021) argues that Palestinians “share the same goal by talking, but when it comes to practice, we are not the same. The new Palestinian society is not as unified by the same goals anymore, because corruption distorts national goals. After all, it replaces national aspirations with individualism and privilege.

### Self-determination in Education

The educational curriculum is one way to measure how much self-determination a nation has. The Oslo agreement delegated the responsibility of education to the PA; however, certain conditions were implied. Palestinians were free to educate their generations, but not free to decide what to include in their curriculums.

Prior to Oslo, the Civil Administration used the Jordanian curriculum in the West Bank and Egyptian in Gaza (Khalidi, 2010). The Palestinian curriculum has come a long way, but still is a cause of controversy. On one hand, Dudien (personal communications, 2021) notes the progress and argues that “it was forbidden to talk about the national project and situation at the time of the occupation. I felt this paradigm shift in the curriculum and the schools of our children. We lived a life in which we did not know the shape of the Palestinian flag. We did not know because it was forbidden. Today you find that school students memorized the anthem and they stand before the flag in the morning”. On the other hand, other respondents argued that the Palestinian curriculum is heavily monitored by Israel and donor countries, which strips Palestinians of the right to determine their history and narratives. Hidmi (personal communications, 2021) argues that “the curriculum does not set the basis for people under occupation who want to be free, it does not build a national identity, in fact, it makes us forget who we are”. Akkawi (personal communications, 2021) notes that it alienates refugees and weakens “the national culture that we want our children to grow up to”. Meanwhile, Aroui (personal communications, 2021) argues that despite monitoring and adjusting the curriculum by the occupation, the PA is still refusing to remove the map of Palestine and not mention refugees and the *Nakba*.



By signing the Oslo agreement, both sides are accepting territorial limits to their narratives and development of identities (kelman, 2005). The Oslo Accords was an indirect solution “where they would modify their narratives so that the 1967 Green Line would become the limit to their future territory and history” (Khoury, 2016). Although the PLO changed their charter and the National Covenant to nullify the articles which called for resistance against Zionist occupation, this did not nullify the concepts from people’s minds nor forget the historic grievances. However, the problem lies within a power asymmetry that sheds light on policing the Palestinian narrative, but not the Israeli narrative (Khoury, 2016).

Accordingly, the Palestinian curriculum is subject to foreign domination by Israel and donor states. This is one of many aspects that demonstrate the lack of Palestinian self-determination within the parameters of Oslo. Domination over the curriculum poses a threat to national aspirations and goals, because it distorts the Palestinian narrative, and excludes the refugees, the *Nakba*, the right to resist occupation, and other cornerstones to Palestinian history.

### Self-determination in Politics

The Oslo Accords divided the Palestinian political debate between those for and those against the agreement. The division distorts the principle of self-determination because it diverts the focus from external self-determination to internal self-determination and separates the West Bank from Gaza.

Firstly, the paradigm shift from revolution to politics had the strongest role to play in affecting national aspirations. It led to a distortion in strategies, approaches, priorities, and goals. Dudien (personal communications, 2021) argues that “the resistance movements should have not turned into parties because our problem today is not cultural, social, economic, nor political, our problem is that the occupation is still existing. Therefore, they should have stayed revolutionary movements separated from the political dimension. the PA represents to end the occupation and liberate the country, but who is going to liberate the country if all the national movements turned into political parties?”. This is evidence that Palestinians have not reached their national aspiration. This paradigm shift also correlates with corruption and nepotism, as “the revolutionary leader became the leader of the state, his deputy became the deputy leader of the state, and the positions were given this way” (Hidmi, personal communications, 2021). There was no indication that the same revolutionary leadership had qualifications to become

political leaders. According to Asfour, former Palestinian Official (personal communications, 2021), “in practice, parties were formed without a political provision despite expectations. This is an incomplete experience”. This distorted the role upon which those revolutionary movements were established, which was to liberate Palestine from occupation.

Secondly, the division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, also called the division between Fateh and Hamas, distorted and affected national aspirations. Hamas is an Islamic movement that was established in the 1980s as an anti-colonial movement, which used Islamic rhetoric and slogans in spreading its ideology (Robinson, 1997). They were against negotiations with the occupation as a way to achieve concessions, and they were publicly against the Oslo Agreement, considering it not fulfilling their national aspirations (Robinson, 1997). They also refused to participate in the PLO and the elections of 1996. Accordingly, Hamas continued its armed resistance against Israel.

However, Hamas’ rejection of Oslo was not ideologically compatible with their participation in the 2006 elections and indicated a fundamental ideological shift (Hovdenak, 2016). The legislative elections of 2006 resulted in a victory for Hamas, with 44% compared to 41% to Fateh. Consequently, Fateh, with its new leadership and the PSF, refused to participate in Hamas’ government. Furthermore, The US and the EU withdrew their aid, as they refused to support the newly elected government (Torres, 2016). “If we were going to push for an election, then we should have made sure that we did something to determine who was going to win”, said Hillary Clinton in a leaked tape (Torres, 2016). Hovdenak (2016) argues that Hamas underwent a series of behavioural moderation policies, but Western countries failed to respond to these developments. Ultimately, the intervention in Palestinian democracy and overthrowing Hamas through the PLO. Ultimately, Israel targeted the leaders of Hamas and arrested many of its members including newly appointed ministers and legislators. The Palestinian legislative council has not been active since, and was later abolished in 2018.

The parties which disagreed with Oslo were punished economically and militarily. The Islamic Parties have turned to their base in Gaza to escape the persecution, while the other anti-Oslo parties were weakened and forced to submit to and depend on Fateh. The PA changed from a government that embraces and represents all political nuances and the Palestinian interest, to an authority dominated by a single party that only represents its own interests (Torres, 2010). Changing the status quo imposes a threat to their political and economic interests which were achieved through Oslo.

The events of 2006-2007 turned a plurality into a division, which affected the sense of unity. Falk (2018) argues that the division has also caused an intra-division within the parties themselves and altered diplomatic capacities. Both Fateh and Hamas cannot reach a consensus within themselves. Qawasmeh (personal communications, 2021) explains that the division “broke us, and broke the PA itself [...] to the point that they marginalized us, and marginalized decision-makers”. Oslo created the illusion of the state which led to social and political divisions. “Before Oslo and the PA, the situation was much clearer to the regular citizens, that there is a Palestinian nation under occupation. After the PA was formed, people considered it a state, and the occupation became somehow not visual. [...] And that highly damaged the national resistance against the occupation” (Issa, personal communications, 2021). The division affected the morale of national aspirations, as it led to disappointment.

### Concluding the Analysis:

Firstly, the rule of law in the West Bank is challenged by the parameters of Oslo and their ramifications. Secondly the economic dependency on Israel and Oslo led to the distortion of alliances and blurred national goals between certain groups. Thirdly, the lack of self-determination in educational curriculum poses a threat to the Palestinian narrative to their right to self-determination. Finally, the illusion of an independent state structure surfaced in 2006, the consequences of the division between the West Bank and Gaza led to disappointment and hopelessness in the national right to self-determination. However, the respondents were passionate about their vision of the right to self-determination. Qawasmeh (personal communications, 2021) notes that “the cause in our hearts through the years. Even if someone gives it up, even if a group gives it up, even if certain parties give it up... The cause stays in everyone’s thoughts and hearts. It is a commitment that everyone will keep on trying to achieve”. Furthermore, Amro (personal communications, 2021) argues that “the occupation divided us in a way that did not give us any unified aspirations, except one; that we are occupied, and we want to liberate our country. Someday we will return”. One can conclude that there are overwhelmingly negative effects and challenges to the national aspirations of Palestinians. Despite the setbacks, Palestinian nationalism proves to be fixed on its unification against the Israeli occupation.

## Conclusion

Through a content analysis of the primary and secondary data, both hypotheses were discussed and measured. The results show that Oslo has negative and positive implications on the aspirations of Palestinians. To a degree, the Palestinians were able to achieve quasi-internal-determination, however, the analysis demonstrates how the national project is impaired as a result of interim agreements. After all, the peace process was expected to end the occupation. The results show that the primary goal is to end the occupation, in the form of which Palestinians themselves understand it. And, to establish a nation-state with legitimately sovereign borders. However, the Oslo Accords blurred the rights of Palestinians to self-determination by legalizing an ambivalent agreement that did not terminate occupation as understood by Palestinians. The illusion of a sovereign Palestinian Authority has changed the Palestinian society on the socio-economic and political dimensions which distorted people's priorities and goals by replacing liberation goals with individualism. Despite these circumstances, respondents argue that the goal of bona fide self-determination persists, even when the approach is hindered by confusion. The issue with the Oslo Accords is exactly that it was unable to change and reconcile the Palestinian and Israeli narratives while imposing a new reality on the ground. This has created a disoriented state of being for the Palestinians, where they are confused between what they want to become, and what the reality of Oslo imposes. Secondly, Oslo has created an illusion of a state apparatus, whereby it established various individualistic incentives that fragmented a unified Palestinian approach to the struggle. The Oslo Accords have indefinitely delayed the achievement of Palestinians' rights by dividing Palestinians' pursuit of liberation. In effect, the Oslo Accords have prioritized the PLO as an organization, rather than a national concept.

## VI. Bibliography

### *Primary Data:*

Abu Amsa, (November, 2021). Personal Interview.

Akkawi, F. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.

Ameer. (November, 2021). Personal Interview. [Anonymous participant #1].

Amro, F. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.

Arouri, F. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.

Aside, M. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Dudien, K. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Hamarshah, A. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Hidmi, N. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Issa, S. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Masrouji, N. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Qawasmeh, N. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Yazan. (November, 2021). Personal Interview. [Anonymous participant #2].  
Zuheiri, M. (November, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Ashrawi, H. (December, 2021). Personal Interview.  
Asfour, H. (December, 2021). Personal Interview.

### *Secondary Data:*

Abu Rtema, A. (2016). Palestinian Identity in the Aftermath of Oslo. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.

Abu Zneid, N. (2021) *Al-Intifada wa Al-dawla: Nidal Al-sha'b Al-filastini*. [The Intifada and the State: Struggle of Palestinian People].

Anziska, S. (2018). *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Aral, B. (2018). Oslo 'Peave Process' as a Rebuttal of Palestinian Self-Determination. *Ortadogu Etutleti: Middle Eastern Studies*, 10(1), p. 8-26.

Bauck, P. (2016). The Oslo Accords: A Common Survivor for Israel and the PLO in Exile?. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.

Chomsky, N. (1990). The Intifada and the Peace Process. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 14(2), 345–353. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45289907>

Desylva, G. (2020). The Long Shadow of Oslo. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.wrmea.org/2020-march-april/the-long-shadow-of-oslo.html>

Falk, R. (2016). After Oslo: A Legal Historical Perspective. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.

Fanon, F. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.). New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fisch, J. & Mage, A. (2015). *The Right to Self-Determination of Peoples*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Foster, Z. J. (2014). The Emergence of a Palestinian National Identity: A Theory-Driven Approach. *Michigan Journal of History*.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Case Study Research Methods*. Continuum, London.
- Hovdenak, A. (2016). Hamas in Transition: The Failure of Sanctions. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.
- Kelman, H. C. (2007). The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes. *The American Psychologist*, 62(4), 287–303. Retrieved From <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.287>
- Khalidi, R. (2010). *Palestinian identity: the construction of modern national consciousness*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Khoury, N. (2016). National narratives and the Oslo peace process: How peacebuilding paradigms address conflicts over history. *Nations and Nationalism*, 22(3), pp. 463-483
- Klabbers, J. (2006). The Right to be Taken Seriously: Self-Determination in International Law. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 28(1), pp. 186-206.
- Massad, J. (2018). Against Self-Determination. *An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development*, 9(2), pp. 161-191.
- Medina, E. (2020). The Right to Self-Determination as a Strategy to Dispute the Legal Field. *Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 25(3), pp. 77-87.
- Mi'ari, M. (2009). Transformation of Collective Identity in Palestine. *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)*, 44(6), 579–598. Retrieved From <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909609343410>
- Naser-Najjab, N. (2020). Palestinian leadership and the contemporary significance of the first Intifada. *Race & Class*. 62(2), 61-79.
- Pappe, I. (2006). *A History of Modern Palestine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511992728>
- Robinson, G. E. (1997). *Building a Palestinian state: the incomplete revolution*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Said, E. (1995). Where Negotiations Have Led. In E. Said (Ed.), *The End of the Peace Process*. Granta Publications.
- Soussi, A. (2019). The mixed legacy of Gold Mier, Israel's first female PM. Aljazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/3/18/the-mixed-legacy-of-gold-meir-israels-first-female-pm>
- Torres, L. (2016). The Oslo Accords and Palestinian Civil Society. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.
- Waage, H. H. (2016). Champions of Peace? Tools in whose hands? Norwegians and Peace Brokering in the Middle East. In Bauck et al. (Eds.), *The Oslo Accords a Critical Assessment*. American University in Cairo Press.